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CHAUCER'S *fraknes*

In my recent paper, "The Historical Background of Chaucer's Knight" (*Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* xx, 161-240), I ventured to suggest (p. 167) that the *fraknes* of *K. T.* 1311 might be a euphemism for pock-marks. A confirmation of this suggestion, tho from documents of a later period, may be observed in the citations of *Pock-frecken*, *Pock-freckled*, *New Eng. Dic.* (under *Pock*): "1530 *PALSGR.* 256/1 *Poke frekyns*, *picquetevre* or *picquottevre de uerolle*. 1695 *Lond. Gaz.* No. 3134/4 *Mary Scarlet*, . . . thin visage, swarthy complexion, pock frecken. 1714 *Ibid.* No. 5223/4 *A spare middle-siz'd Man, Pockfreckled and Ruddy Complexion.*"

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A DIALOGUE BY BOILEAU

I came recently on the following entry, under date of February, 1684, and under the classification "Miscellanies," in the "Catalogue of Books Printed and Published at London, in Hillary Term (1683/84)," contained in Arber's reprint of *The Term Catalogues*, (II, 62): "The Infernal Observator, or the Quickening Dead. In a dialogue written lately in French by Mr. Boileau, and now made English. Octavo. Sold by B. Tooke at the Ship in St. Paul's Churchyard; W. Davis in Amen Corner; and Mr. Beaulieu in Duke's Court, against St. Martin's Church." Whether this book is extant or not I do not know; I have not been able to trace it. But can anyone throw any light on the "dialogue written lately in French by Mr. Boileau"? If "Mr. Boileau" is the author of the *Art Poétique*, the dialogue may be one of three things,—a work that has not come down to us, or the *Fragment d'un Dialogue contre les Modernes qui font des vers latins*, or the *Dialogue des Morts* (the name given to the pirated editions of the work known in its authoritative form as *Les Héros de Roman*). Boileau had composed both of these prior to 1674, but it does not appear that anyone except Brossette had any knowledge of the *Fragment*; Boileau did not even write it down;¹ besides, the title of the English translation does not correspond with the subject-matter of the *Fragment*. As to the *Dialogue des Morts*, he composed it in 1664-65, and recited it to friends; but, as far as I know, it has always been accepted by scholars that its first (unauthorized) appearance in print was in the second volume of the collection known as *Le Retour des Pièces Choiesies, ou Bigarrures Curieuses*, published at Emmerich

¹ See Gidel's ed. of Boileau, III, 235, note.

in Rhenish Prussia in 1688.² Does the entry in *The Term Catalogues* suggest that there was an earlier pirated edition of this dialogue in French, unknown to scholars? Or can sufficient emphasis be placed on the word "written" in the phrase "a dialogue written lately in French" to justify the belief that this English translation was made from the French manuscript of someone who heard Boileau recite the piece and copied it down? Our only alternative is to believe that there was another Boileau, contemporary with the great one (and well enough known to the English public to need no distinguishing Christian name), who wrote at almost the same time a dialogue of which the subject-matter and title must have been singularly like those of Despréaux's work (in order to justify the title of the English translation). It would be rather piquant if Boileau's work had first attained the dignity of type in the English language.

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BRIEF MENTION

Chaucer and his Poetry. Lectures delivered in 1914 on the Percy Turnbull Memorial Foundation in the Johns Hopkins University, by George Lyman Kittredge (Cambridge, at the Harvard University Press, 1915). The Turnbull Lectures on *Chaucer and his Poetry* are more than a notable *fait accompli*; they are also an omen. And it is the significance of Professor Kittredge's book rather than primarily the book itself with which this note is concerned.

The development of Chaucerian scholarship within the last three or four decades has been a peculiarly interesting one. For it has represented a succession of preoccupations, now with this, now with that relatively circumscribed area within the larger confines of a wide and varied field. The conquest of the kingdom, like the winning of pre-Chaucerian England itself, has come through the slow reduction of shire after shire. The emphasis in the earlier days was, as it had to be, upon problems of language and text—the indispensable foundation for any further study whatsoever. Then gradually the stress was shifted to the active quest of sources, and that in turn yielded first place to the minute scrutiny of problems of chronology. To the short-sighted observer (and there has been no speech or language where their voice has not been heard) Chaucerian scholarship seemed to be engrossed with problems—whether of language, text, sources, or chronology—fascinating in themselves, but alien to the supreme end of literary investigation, the interpre-

² See Crane's ed. of the *Héros de Roman*, Boston, 1902, p. 37.